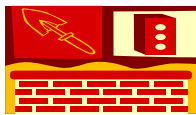


DOWNTOWN HISTORIC TOUR GUIDE



BANK OF INVERNESS

This building was erected at **200 W. Main Street** in 1916 and housed the Citrus County Bank, which closed in January 1929. By June of that year, the only remaining bank in Citrus County was the Bank of Homosassa. On November 20, 1929, the Bank of Homosassa moved to this Inverness building, changing its name to the Bank of Inverness and has remained there since. Under the direction of George H. Brannen, Sr., this was the only bank to survive the "Great Depression". Through the years, the 1st floor housed the bank on one side and the IGA grocery store, Florida Power Company office, and Hagar-Brannen Insurance on the other. The 2nd floor housed local attorneys and various business offices, and now is occupied by Brannen Mortgage Company. The building was renovated in the early 1960's and again in 1994. As of September 11, 2001 the Brannen family had operated the Bank of Inverness for 75 years. Hampton Dunn wrote in his book "Back Home" – George H. Brannen, Sr. was devoted to laying the groundwork for a financial institution in Inverness that was first and foremost a secure depository for funds of the few who lived here, at that time. Dedicated with a historic plaque on September 11, 2001.



MASONIC TEMPLE

Citrus Lodge #118, F and AM, was built at **95 S. Pine Street on the corner of Main Street** and dedicated in 1910, ready for occupancy in January 1911. The costliest building in the county at the time, it was a splendid 3-story brick construction that cost \$17,285. Originally, the 1st floor housed 2 stores, the 2nd floor had 5 offices and the 3rd floor was the Lodge Room for the Masons and Eastern Star. After the dedication ceremony, a

Crowd between 1800-2500 people flocked to the picnic grounds at the end of Apopka Avenue, near the residence of W.H. Warnock. There they feasted on barbecued meats, fried fish, chicken pileau, baked and boiled ham, salads, pies of every kind, thousands of loaves of bread, pickles, various cakes, fruits, barrels of ice water and jugs of excellent coffee. The town's coronet band played "Dixie" and other tunes. Walter F. Warnock, Sr., was worshipful master of the lodge at the time the temple was built. He also served as Clerk of Circuit Court and editor/proprietor of the Chronicle. At one time, there was a movie theatre and City Hall on the 2nd floor as well as professional offices. Dr. TS Henley & Dr. Harrel Martin, Dentists, Dr. Claude Carter, Dr. Cranford & Dr. Gail Osterhout, Attorneys Mannie Scofield, George Scofield, Charles Fitzpatrick, and Donald Bradshaw. For many years, Hall's Drugstore occupied the 1st floor. In 1963, lightning struck the building causing fire damage. After restoration, it was decided a new building should be built, and in 1965, the Masons & Eastern Star moved to their new location at Zephyr Street & Hendrix Avenue, selling the 1910 Masonic Temple to private enterprise. The County Commissioners utilized the 3rd floor early in 1990 for several years. This building was dedicated with a historic plaque on October 20, 2000.



DIME STORE

Allen's 5, 10 & 25 Store, was built by Jack Kibler in the early 1920's at **110 W. Main Street**. Occupants included the Inverness Post Office, Vann's Drug Store and Ernest Johnston's Restaurant prior to Allen's opening in 1932. For 53 years George A. "Pop" Allen and his son, Otto operated the dime store, that was billed as "one of the most modern department stores in South Florida" in 1932. The store supplied everything from hardware, farm supplies, yard goods, clothing for the family, footwear, glassware, toys and stationary. During its peak, 6 employees served customers and Saturday was the day most families came to town to shop. Stores would stay open until midnight to serve families who attended a late movie, or came to town to visit on "the square". In the early 1940's youngsters in Inverness

would buy their comic books and toys here. As one of Citrus County's most successful businessmen, the Allen family also owned and operated a hardware store and lumberyard. Otto Allen closed the store in 1985 and donated memorabilia to the Citrus County Historical Society where they are currently on display at the Historic 1912 Courthouse. The building was then occupied by A-Z Furniture, Seaweed Sam's Restaurant, Main Exchange Restaurant, and at the time of the historic plaque dedication on September 11, 2001, Stumpknockers on the Square Restaurant.



DAMPIER BUILDING

This building at **107 Courthouse Square** was built by Francis Marion Dampier, Sr. as Dampier Department Store. The family operated the successful department store from 1945 to 1967. It is remembered that "Frank" Dampier spent many hours sitting on a wooden bench under an oak tree outside the store, visiting with acquaintances. The Dampier family was prominent business leaders in Inverness. Western Union operated from this store for a period of time. Francis Dampier, Sr., a pioneer of Inverness, ran a general store at Tompkinsville before the City of Inverness existed. He was related by marriage to the Tompkinsville namesake, Alf Tompkins. Francis Dampier's brother, Earl, ran a grocery store in Inverness before the Depression. Earl G. Dampier was the co-owner of the Evergreen Hotel located on Main Street across from the Bank of Inverness. F.M. Dampier was the Postmaster, had a sawmill and was a partner in a general merchandise store. After Dampier Department Store closed, the building housed the Western Auto Store, a carpet store, the Goodwill Store, and Carolina Direct Furniture. In 2003, at the time of the historic plaque dedication, the current business was the Towne & Country All Wood Furniture Store.

DECO CAFÉ



Reportedly, W.S. Warnock, founder of the Citrus County Chronicle and George Demuro, Clerk of the Court, purchased the land at **109 Courthouse Square** in 1908. The building was constructed and operated by City Savings Bank in 1910. Edward Sasser ran a dry goods store here in the 1930's, and first served as a City Councilman in 1918 and again from 1935-1951. West & Reaves Lumber Co. purchased the building in 1920, and operated it as a commissary for the lumber mill across the street, near what is currently N. Apopka Ave. The building was then purchased by Wilson Plumbing in 1936, and sold in 1939 in a tax deed sale for \$17.26. G.W. and M.C. Scofield, attorneys at law, occupied the building from 1945-1952. The Citrus Co. Chronicle occupied the building during the late 1950's. Balasch Dry Cleaners is remembered in this building for many years, owned and operated by both Paul Balasch, Sr. and Paul Balasch, Jr. A steam boiler was used in the dry cleaning process prior to modern day cleaning and technology. Paul's wife Kathleen, served on City Council for 17 years and was the first woman Mayor from 1972-1973. Other occupants of the building include Lovick Williams Law Office, Endangered Species, and DigiCell Communications. At the historic plaque dedication, the Deco Café operates from this building.



OLD COURTHOUSE

The old Citrus County Courthouse, now known as the Old Courthouse Heritage Museum, was constructed in 1912/13 for \$55,885. The official opening was June 3, 1912. The diamond shaped road layout presented a challenge to Tampa architect Willis R. Biggers. Instead, he borrowed an idea from the Greek temple design and had the corners of the building facing NE, SE, SW, and NW. It is the only courthouse in Florida set like this. Fireplaces were used to warm the building in the winter, and the tower clock cost \$800. During WW II,

the tower was used to watch for enemy aircraft. Rooms were rented upstairs for \$5 to \$10 per month. Electricity came in 1913, and 36 electric lights were installed for \$248.50. In 1946, 1500 yards of dirt was removed from underneath the building to add a storage basement. This was the main government office until 1977. The upstairs courtroom continued to be used until 1992, when the ceiling fell in during a court hearing. It has recently been remodeled to look as it did in 1912. This was the place that Elvis Presley filmed the movie, "Follow That Dream", in 1961. It is interesting to note that restoration plans began in 1994. Parts of the plans were developed by studying a scene from Elvis' movie. John Parks, a nationally known restoration architect had also developed plans for George Washington's Valley Forge. It took 2.5 million dollars and 7 years to complete, and today this national register site houses several galleries displaying pictures and artifacts from our county's history. Don't miss the great seal on the floor, which wrongly depicts a brave instead of a maiden.

COCA COLA BLDG



The All-American drink was introduced to Citrus County in the early 1900's. W.T. Baxley acted as a sub-bottler to the Tampa Coca Cola Bottling Company, and began bottling it in Hernando in 1906. Empty bottles were washed in Hernando Lake, then filled and transported by horse drawn wagon to Inverness. In 1914, World War I was underway in Europe, and the phosphate mines in Hernando started closing. W.T. Baxley then moved his building and business to Inverness behind his home at 110 N. Pine Street. After Mr. Baxley's death on December 29, 1931, Mrs. Pearl Baxley headed the operation in this brick building at **112 N. Apopka Avenue**. In 1933, the Inverness plant bought the Brooksville territory. Mrs. Baxley died in May of 1960 at 85, and son, Carey Baxley, and daughter, Ina Lee Baxley Green, continued the business. In the early years, it would take a year to use a 50-gallon barrel of syrup, producing around 250 cases a year – of course, it developed into a thriving and

prosperous business. The family business and building were sold to Florida Coca-Cola in 1979, with the County purchasing the building from Coca-Cola in 1983. This site was dedicated with a historic plaque on October 20, 2000.



GREATER MOUNT CARMEL BAPTIST CHURCH

The Reverend A.L. Dutch, Deacon Arthur Bell and the entire membership of Shialo Baptist Church from Stage Pond, Florida, organized the Mount Carmel Baptist Church in 1894. The present sanctuary at **122 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Ave.** was erected in 1923 as a concrete block rectangular church building with "no heat" under the leadership of Reverend L.T. Thompson, one of 15 ministers that have pastured this church. "Greater" was added to the official church name on September 3, 1983.



MCLEOD HOUSE

Built around 1915, this house at **207 N. Apopka Avenue** is most remembered for the McLeod Family who lived here from 1941-1998. Oscar Penn McLeod was born to a pioneer family near Perry, Florida. He was awarded a teaching certificate in 1918 and married Mayo Artie Reams at the Greenville Baptist Pastorium, Greenville, Florida, on September 8, 1918. He furthered his education through a correspondence course in "higher accounting" leading to a CPA degree. After the move to Inverness in 1927, he worked as a bookkeeper for many local businesses and with Work Projects Administration (WPA) as superintendent/supervisor/timekeeper for Citrus

County School construction projects. In the 1940's he was appointed as an auditor for the State of Florida Attorney General's office. His work there resulted in his being hired by John Ringling North of Ringling Brothers Barnum and Bailey Circus of Sarasota where he worked until his death. He served as a school trustee in Citrus County while raising 12 children here – 10 boys and 2 girls. For 28 years there was a McLeod boy on the Citrus High School football team – Coach Walt Connors described them as born athletes! Many Citrus County children fondly remember going to the McLeod House – with 12 children, there was always someone in the yard to play with. O.P. McLeod died in 1947 and Mayo McLeod died in 1982. The property was purchased by Richard and Sandra Dixon in 1999 and transformed it into a boutique and tearoom, retaining the name "The McLeod House". Photos of all 12 McLeod children could be viewed in the foyer of the house. At the time of the historic plaque dedication in October 2004, Keith Chancas occupied the building, as a French restaurant "Chateau Chansezz".



R.O. HICKS HOME

In 1900, Robert O. Hicks built this house at **214 W. Tompkins St.** after coming to Citrus County from Tennessee in 1886. The house was uniquely designed with an octagonal roof with the belief that it could weather hurricanes. This is possibly the oldest home remaining in Inverness. The only changes have been the addition of the front porch and 2 bathrooms. The spacious high-ceiling living room, dining room, and kitchen have remained unaltered. It was constructed of solid heart of pine lumber and surrounded by original fence. Members of the Hicks family have lived in the house since. Bessie Hicks currently calls it home. She taught elementary school for many years. The Hicks family continues to operate a successful orange grove in

the city near the Gospel Island Bridge. This house received a historic plaque and is now the Chamber of Commerce.



JK KELLEY HOUSE (BUTTS' HOUSE)

J.K. and Bonnie Kelly were married in Inverness on November 26, 1902. In 1903, James Keels Kelley built this two-story, wood frame, colonial, revival-style residence at **410 W. Main St.** It featured a beautiful verandah, which was best suited for socializing on warm summer evenings. According to a 1936 Citrus Co. Chronicle article, J.K. Kelley was a County Commissioner (when Citrus and Hernando were one county), and a school board member. He was also a mason, and an elder in the First Presbyterian Church, where his wife was a charter member. He served on the Inverness City Council from 1923 to 1927. Mr. Kelley is best remembered for management of a turpentine still located at the southern end of town. The vast acreage of pine forests in Citrus County made it ideal for the turpentine industry. Pinesap was collected at the base of the tree, distilled, and stored in barrels for shipment. In the 1890's, a barrel of turpentine brought around \$3.00, and was an important ingredient in varnish, paint, soap, explosives, ointments and even medications. Prisoners were leased from the State as laborers in some stills. For a period of time, Mrs. Kelley operated "The Palm Rest Tourist Home" here, which was probably when the sunrooms were added on the east side of the second floor for more space. Mr. and Mrs. Kelley lived in this house until Edward and Margaret Butts purchased it in 1961, after moving here from Paducah, Kentucky. The Butts' described Inverness as "The Garden of Eden" when they settled in with their two children, Mike and Suzanne. Mr. and Mrs. Butts, and later their son Mike, operated the Shell Gas Station across the street for 40 years, and remember many changes to Main Street, from a sleepy little town to a busy 4-lane commercial area. Edward Butts died in 1997, and his son, Mike continues to run a tire and vehicle maintenance business in the

Inverness area. At the time the historical plaque was dedicated, "Miss Margaret" remains active in her church, volunteers at the 1912 Historic Courthouse, and takes pride in her home as one of the few remaining on Main Street.



WOMAN'S CLUB

This building at **311 W. Main Street** was reportedly constructed in the early 1900's as a library. Schools Superintendent R.L. Turner later occupied it until the 1912 Courthouse was constructed and his office moved there in 1917. The Woman's Club of Inverness was formed. The building was enlarged in 1922, paid off in 1926, and then became a library. The Kiwanis Club, chartered in 1925, was also housed here in 1925/26, and the members of the Woman's Club served lunch to the Kiwanis members to raise funds in the early 1960's. The library was moved to another location and became a branch of the Central Florida Regional Library System. The Inverness Woman's Club was active during WWI, forming a committee for the Red Cross and rolled bandages as well as knitted sweaters, scarves and lay covers for the servicemen. They planted oak trees at the grammar school, naming them for Inverness boys in the Armed Services. The Junior/Senior Prom was held here in 1945. The Inverness Woman's Club organized the first PTA in Citrus County, and furnished a room in the late 1950's for the newly build Citrus Memorial Hospital. Woman's Club community services included aiding meals on wheels, Citrus United Basket, Inverness Care Center, Hacienda Girl's Ranch, Girl and Boy Scouts, Red Cross, Cancer Society, Heart Association and All Children's Hospital. George Derewenko and Linda Bega purchased the building in 1999. At the time of the historic plaque dedication in October 2004, Landmark Realty occupied it.

GEORGE CARTER HOUSE



In 1903, this house was built for George Carter, Citrus County's 3rd Sheriff at **301 W. Main Street**. The house was the first in Inverness to have a bathroom and was one of the first 13 buildings to be "wired up" when electricity came to Citrus County in 1913. Reportedly, the Governor suspended Sheriff Carter and launched an investigation of alleged misconduct accusing the Sheriff in not preventing the lynching of a black man who was accused of, but not tried for, the killing of local man, Robert Russell. His removal caused such uproar among the citizens, who felt he had been unfairly treated; the Governor later reinstated him. Clinton D. Shultz, who partnered with J.L. Connell in the agriculture and mining business, raised his family here. Mr. Shultz's daughter, fondly remembered as "Miss Virginia" married long-time County Clerk of Courts, Francis "Cowboy" Williams. The Mitchell's later owned the house, offering room and board. It was then purchased and restored by George & Carol Derewenko and Joe & Linda Bega in 1986. In 2003, it was dedicated with a historic plaque.



CROWN HOTEL

In the early 1920's, the Orange Hotel was originally located on the NE corner of W. Main Street and Seminole Avenue. At one time, it was a boarding house and commissary, operated by Francis Dampier, Sr. Later the 2-story building was moved to **109 N. Seminole Avenue** by cutting it in half, raising it and placing a newly constructed 1st floor, creating a 3-story hotel. The 1926 Citrus High School Junior-senior banquet was held here. Eva Holden operated her beauty shop on the 1st floor and Charles B. Fitzpatrick ran his law office here for some time. Hampton Dunn's book, "Back Home" notes that in 1957 that one could

get a bountiful breakfast of ham, bacon or sausage, 2 eggs, toast and coffee for 60 cents. Lunch consisted of 2 meats, choice of 3 vegetables, bread, butter and a beverage for 87 cents. In 1959, "Aunt Tom" Scott sold the hotel after owning it for 58 years. Ms. Scott, who was 22 years old when she purchased it, sold it to an Auburndale businessman, Lynwood N. Smith. It was renamed the Colonial Hotel and later became the Crown Hotel when English investors refurbished the building in 1981. Jill & Nigel Sumner purchased and operated the hotel from 1990 to 2001. Many memorable social occasions have been held here over the years.

MAIN STREET BUSINESS DISTRICT



Beginning at the corner of Main Street and Pine Avenue is where the Citizen's Bank built this structure around 1912 and failed in the late 1920's. It was later occupied as Vann's Drug Store, Bacon's Drug Store, Lanier's Drug Store, Culpepper's Drug Store, Bennett's Drug Store, Marshall's Drug Store, and for a period of time, the Inverness bus stations was operated from here.

As a drug store for many years, with a soda fountain, it is remembered that this was the place to bring your "girl" to buy her an ice cream sundae or Coca-Cola. In the 1940's, Bennett's Drug Store also boasted a great cigar selection. It was later occupied by Damron's Auto Parts and numerous pub-type eating establishments, and at present Coach's Pub operates here, as well as in the adjacent building.

The next building was built in the 1920's as a department store. There were many owners through the years, but in 1947, Owen Kennedy opened his "ready to wear" store and successfully operated it until 1986. For a period of time, Kennedy's was the only store in Inverness where you could buy women's and men's clothing. Mr. Kennedy also served as postmaster, city councilman, school board member, Citrus Memorial Hospital Board, and was an original member of the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, which recognized him as "man of the year". Later occupants were the Waterbed Store, C & D Gifts and then became an addition to Coach's Pub.

Currently Angelo's Pizza, this was once an open-air market operated by the Scardasis family. The 3 parcels of property were purchased by Theodore Scardasis in 1920 where they sold fresh fruit, vegetables, bread, parched peanuts and penny candy. The building was constructed in 1927 where he operated a general store. In 1933, 2 of the spaces were rented to GM & Edna Richburg for a restaurant. After Mr. Scardasis died in 1937, Ms. Scardasis assumed control of the restaurant naming it "Palace Café", specializing in Florida style food prepared by Elizabeth and Loretha, local cooks. The 3rd space was a bar/grill with a poolroom. John Croft came to town on Saturday evenings and sold boiled peanuts and fresh cold sugar cane juice from his truck. Air-conditioning was added to the buildings in the early 1960's. Previous businesses include Costa's Shoe Shop, Altenbergers' Shoes, Gouldbourn's Econowash, King's Bakery, First Federal Savings, Charlie's Restaurant, and now along with Angelo's Pizza is a branch office of the Citrus County Chronicle.

The next section includes 101, 103, & 105 Courthouse Square where Jack Reed built in the 1930's. This has housed many businesses including West Coast Title Company, Robert Ritz Real Estate, a donut shop, Mildred's Beauty Shop, and the Western Auto Store, to name a few. The Title Company invited the whole town to come and listen to a Jack Dempsey/Gene Tunney boxing match on his radio – a big event since there were very few radios in the area at that time. Now you can visit Inverness Antiques, Courthouse Antiques, Jagged Edge, and Ritzy Rags & Glitzy Jewels in this section.

Located at 115 Courthouse Square was the Citizens Loan Company in the late 1940's owned and operated by Bill Keating. He was the driving force behind the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce, being its first president. Over the years, The Magic Brush, House of Beauty Salons, Gibbs Insurance Agency and Gill's Auctioneering have occupied this building. Now, the current business is the Budget Insurance.

The last building located at 107 & 109 N. Apopka Avenue appears to have been built in the early 1920's. Until 1953, it was operated as Carl Bellamy's Dry Cleaners, and then in 1936, Snell & Louise Mills operated Sunshine Cleaners, where they offered curb service and daily home delivery. A wood boiler made the steam for pressing. Edward Sasser purchased the building and ran the Sunshine Market and a commissary for the West Reaves Lumber Company. Mr. Sasser was elected to serve on the 1st Inverness City Council from 1918-1951. The last known owner of this building was Walt Connors.

Across North Apopka to the right of the new Courthouse is best remembered as the home of the Citrus County Chronicle, established in 1891, and located here from 1922 to 1981. David Arthur's owned the building and was editor/publisher from 1964 to 1981. The Chronicle has played an integral part in Citrus County for reporting news to the citizens. After the Chronicle moved to 44E and then to Meadowcrest in Crystal River, several law offices have been here, currently being the Daniel Snow Law Office.

At 205 Courthouse Square, you will find John's Shoe Repair. In the mid 1920's, the Merry family constructed the building and operated a jewelry store. In approximately the early 1950's, Jean Roscow purchased it and her husband, John operated an insurance agency, sold real estate, managed Western Union, and ran his travel agency. Since that time, it was a temporary library, various law offices, and insurance agencies.

207 Courthouse Square is known as the Valerie Theatre. Built in the mid 1920's, it was owned by Mrs. PG Maddox and leased by Herbert Pittman of Clearwater when the "talkies" started replacing the silent movies. To compete with the Avalon Theatre on N. Apopka Avenue, the prices of a movie were cut to 10 cents for children & 25 cents for adults. Soon, City Council adopted a resolution to permit Sunday movies, which boosted trade in the City. In the late 1930's, Donald Giddens remembers someone releasing a skunk in the theatre during a movie! Margie Yoder Sanders remembers paying for a movie with a bag of rags when she did not have the cash. Barry Wimbish, John Matson and Bill Cumba were some of the theatre managers. Mr. Wimbish served on City Council from 1941-1943.

Located at 209 Courthouse Square is where Frank Sanders built Peninsular Abstract Company around 1912. Richard "Dick" Kaufman bought the business and changed the name to Citrus Title, building a new building adjacent to this one in 1973. For a time, Connor's Office Supply rented the building. Mr. Kaufman was elected as a school board member, as well as serving several terms as a city councilman. The law firm of Bradshaw & Mountjoy bought the building from Mr. Kaufman and resides there currently.

Now crossing the lawn of the historic Courthouse to the opposite side, you will find that 101, 103, & 105 W. Main Street has remained occupied with thriving businesses. Built around 1915, this building has housed Thompson & Savary General Merchandise, Sasser's Dry Goods, Edgar Bellamy's Grocery Store for 19 years, Richburg Grocery Store for 40 years, Mary Scott's Restaurant – where people would often bring in their "catch/game"

to be cooked; A & P Store, Western Union, just to name a few. Recent occupants have been Country at Home, Sandy Bottom Bayou, Vanishing Breeds, all owned by Tim & John Channel. The office building of Militello & Militello at 107 W. Main Street was built in 1911, and once housed Allen Hardware, Annie Savary Tookey Millinery, and Rayford Meeks Flowers & Meek's Boutique.

For the last of the historic buildings in the immediate downtown area, cross the street towards Coach's Pub, walk down the sidewalk to the building just behind Coach's. This building was built in 1912 and was constructed of red clay brick laid 12' thick and tied together with 1' iron rods to hold the 2nd story in place. There were 2 wood burning fireplaces for heat. The Inverness Post Office was located here from 1915-1937 with Mary "Mollie" Prodgén as Postmaster until 1936, when Joseph P. Savary took the position. Richburg Grocery Store was on the 1st floor from 1939-1942, and George Marion & Edna Richburg used the 2nd floor as their residence. From 1942-1945, the Conrad-Morris Funeral Home was here. The owner, Coy Conrad served as Mayor of Inverness from 1941-1943. O. Frank Scofield & Charles S. Reed owned the building from 1946-1954. Carl Ogden & Carey Smoak operated a building construction business at that time. From 1968-1997, Carey Smoak & Jack White operated their general building contractor business from here. It was an ice cream parlor in 1998-1999, then "Accents by Grace", and now the Ice Cream Doctor.

We hope you enjoyed your stroll through time, realizing the many offerings the City of Inverness had in the past, and now have today!

We welcome you to come back to our friendly community.





INVERNESS
FLORIDA
WALK THROUGH
HISTORY



City of Inverness

212 West Main Street
Inverness, FL 34450

Phone (352) 726-2611

Fax (352) 726-0607

www.inverness-fl.gov